

City Council

Department Description

Columbus City Council is the chief policy-making arm of city government, empowered by City Charter to exercise legislative control over city expenditures. Citizens elect the seven-member council at-large to four-year terms of office. Primary responsibilities include the adoption of the annual operating and capital budgets, authorizing certain contracts, and enacting amendments to the Columbus City Code. In addition to fiscal control and regulatory authority, Council establishes land use policy through its zoning powers.

The Council works closely with the administrative branch of city government in the formation of policy, including work force and economic development initiatives, tax incentives, annexation and land use, and efforts to serve Columbus families. As well, City Council initiates and facilitates on-going cooperative efforts with other governments, the business community and other institutions to ensure a safe environment and a high quality of life for all Columbus citizens.

Council's chief of staff oversees all functions of the legislative research office (LRO), the City Clerk's staff, and City Treasurer. Activities include public policy analyses, including the budget and city programming, public information efforts and research and application efforts to reduce operating costs, both on a citywide basis and within the offices of City Council and the City Clerk.

Legislative aides and the Legislative Resource Office provide Council members advice and information regarding budgetary, neighborhood, community, and economic development matters.

Council appoints the City Clerk, who maintains the journal of Council activity, codifying general ordinances and maintaining custody of deeds, abstracts, and titles owned by the city. Council also appoints the City Treasurer, whose duties include the investment of all city funds.

Department Mission

Members of the staff of Columbus City Council believe our first priority is to provide high quality, responsive service to the people of Columbus. We strive to demonstrate the utmost respect for our citizens and for each other, in a workplace that highly values teamwork, personal integrity and competence. Our overriding goal is to always do our best for the citizens of the City of Columbus.

Strategic Priorities for 2006

Council's strategic priorities for 2006 will continue to focus on three areas: working to better serve the needs of all Columbus families, including keeping public safety as the city's top priority; job creation efforts; and continued belt tightening to maintain fiscal health.

Council believes that creating and maintaining jobs is essential to a vibrant city. Council will continue to work with the administration to develop innovative collaborations to incentivize significant private investment in what traditionally would have been primarily publicly funded projects. The on-going revitalization of the Northland corridor and downtown are two prime examples. The implementation of a new growth policy in 2004—first reflected in the northwest growth corridor on Hayden Run Road—that calls on developers and suburbs to share in the cost of needed infrastructure and services, such as roads and safety services, exemplifies this new approach, commonly called “sustainable growth.” These efforts will continue and be expanded elsewhere.

Other key points of an overall job creation strategy include: 1) continuing to push development of the high-tech research corridor along state route 315 with The Ohio State University, Battelle, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, and the Columbus Technology Leadership Council, 2) working to keep homegrown talent through investments that support entrepreneurial startups, 3) making targeted capital investments to help bring idle properties back into production.

Council continues to identify and implement better business practices to make government more effective and accessible to the public. Council implemented electronic production of legislation in 2003, including in-house publication and online distribution of the city bulletin and meeting agendas. In addition to saving at least \$150,000 annually, web-based access to the bulletin, agendas and city budget documents dramatically increases the public's ability to monitor and comment on city government activity.

Past years' reductions in other miscellaneous expenses continue, as do revenue enhancement efforts in Parking Violations Bureau operations. Efforts to make the agency more user-friendly through an E-payment option have succeeded; such payments now account for about 31 percent of all parking ticket revenue.

Council continues working with the administration to create greater downtown and neighborhood housing opportunities as a primary tool to secure downtown stability. City assistance may include various incentives for developers, such as tax abatements, or targeted use of city capital monies to leverage private investments.

Council will also continue working with the administration to encourage other political jurisdictions to practice “responsible development” within the Big Darby watershed. To protect this important natural resource Council extended its moratorium on city sewer and water line extensions in the watershed through at least the end of 2005, until a comprehensive, intergovernmental planning accord is complete. Council hopes such an accord allows for the exercise of personal property rights, being sensitive to preservation and environmental protection objectives.

Protecting the city's most vulnerable citizens will continue to receive Council attention as it works with community advocates such as the Columbus Medical Association, the United Way, the Community Shelter Board, the Neighborhood Health Center System, and the YWCA. These organizations and others bring needed social services and accessible health care to low-income families and populations within the community. Another health-related issue for Council is promotion of wider distribution of automated defibrillation devices (AEDs). Project HeartStart, a collaborative effort begun in 2003, continues to educate the public about the need for rapid response to heart attacks, and seeks to make these life-savings devices more accessible to the general public. The safe playgrounds initiative, which began in 2005, will continue to bring improved recreation opportunities to some of the city's lowest-income neighborhoods.

2006 Budget Issues

- The recommended general fund budget for City Council includes funding for contracts with the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Experience Columbus (FKA the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau). In addition to general fund support, Experience Columbus will receive over 29 percent of hotel/motel tax receipts, or approximately \$3.99 million.

Budget and Program Summary

CITY COUNCIL FINANCIAL SUMMARY					
DIVISION SUMMARY	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Original Appropriation	2005 Estimated Expenditures	2006 Proposed
City Council	\$ 10,224,676	\$ 10,864,487	\$ 11,487,664	\$ 11,525,184	\$ 12,564,852
TOTAL	\$ 10,224,676	\$ 10,864,487	\$ 11,487,664	\$ 11,525,184	\$ 12,564,852

DIVISION SUMMARY BY CHARACTER					
CITY COUNCIL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES SUMMARY	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Original Appropriation	2005 Estimated Expenditures	2006 Proposed
Personnel	\$ 2,313,872	\$ 2,171,835	\$ 2,304,523	\$ 2,304,523	\$ 2,540,839
Materials & Supplies	28,669	12,949	30,000	30,000	75,822
Services	1,177,838	1,666,339	2,133,197	2,170,717	1,968,191
Other	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	\$ 3,520,379	\$ 3,851,123	\$ 4,467,720	\$ 4,505,240	\$ 4,584,852
CITY COUNCIL HOTEL/MOTEL EXPENDITURES SUMMARY	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Original Appropriation	2005 Estimated Expenditures	2006 Proposed
Services	\$ 6,704,297	\$ 7,013,364	\$ 7,019,944	\$ 7,019,944	\$ 7,980,000
TOTAL	\$ 6,704,297	\$ 7,013,364	\$ 7,019,944	\$ 7,019,944	\$ 7,980,000

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY BY FUND

FUND SUMMARY	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Original Appropriation	2005 Estimated Expenditures	2006 Proposed
General	\$ 3,520,379	\$ 3,851,123	\$ 4,467,720	\$ 4,505,240	\$ 4,584,852
Hotel/Motel Tax	6,704,297	7,013,364	7,019,944	7,019,944	7,980,000
TOTAL	\$ 10,224,676	\$ 10,864,487	\$ 11,487,664	\$ 11,525,184	\$ 12,564,852

DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL SUMMARY

DIVISION	FT/PT*	2003 Actual	2004 Actual	2005 Authorized	2006 Authorized
City Council	FT	30	31	33	33
	PT	1	1	3	3
TOTAL		31	32	36	36
*FT=Full-Time PT=Part-Time					

City Council				
Program:	Administration		2005	2006
			Appropriated	Budget
Program Mission:	To approve all appropriations and laws for Columbus, and to provide a public forum for the discussion of issues by the citizenry.	Expenditures	\$ 4,467,720	\$ 4,584,852
		Full-Time	33	33
		Part-Time	3	3
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Program:	Hotel/Motel Tax			
Program Mission:	To provide support for Experience Columbus and for expanding cultural services.	Expenditures	\$ 7,019,944	\$ 7,980,000
		Full-Time	0	0
		Part-Time	0	0

